

Medical Student Research Conference Awards

September 18, 2026

Mentor Awards

Summer Research Fellowship Outstanding Mentor in Basic Science Research

Michal Kidacki, MD, PhD, Dermatology

Nominated by Ahmed Baig, M2

Summer Research Fellowship Outstanding Mentor in Clinical Research

Alina Dumitrescu, MD, Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences

Nominated by Sabah Munir, M2

Summer Research Fellowship Outstanding Mentor in Translational Research

Jessica Sieren, PhD, Radiology-Division of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Imaging

Nominated by David Lee, M2

Student Awards

François M. Abboud Prize for Best Platform Presentation

Lucy Kim, M2

Oral

Title: "Characteristics of High-Performing Low-Volume Birthing Facilities in Iowa"

Mentor: Stephanie Radke, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Donald D. Heistad Prize for Best Poster Presentation

Lorena Tran, M1

Poster

Title: "Epigenetic inflammatory memory is sustained in airway basal cells in vivo"

Mentor: Alejandro Pezzulo, Internal Medicine

Borts Award (U of I Foundation Award)

Jacob Hill, M2

Poster

Title: "Vaccine Hesitancy Among US Adults and the 7C Psychological Antecedents Model: A Cluster Analysis"

Mentor: Natoshia Askelson, College of Public Health

Edward Heath Award (U of I Foundation Award)

Dominic Rivas, M2G

Oral

Title: "Mitochondrial Responses To Simulated Loading Of Articular Cartilage"

Mentor: Mitch Coleman, Orthopedics and Rehabilitation

Melvin Marcus Clinical Research Award (U of I Foundation Award)

Justin Crawmer, M3

Oral

Title: "Weight-Bearing CT Reveals Differing Restoration of Tibiofemoral Rotation and Screw Home Mechanics Following ACL Reconstruction"

Mentor: Don Anderson, Orthopedics and Rehabilitation

Excellence in Global Health Programs Research Award

Allison Dodds, M3

Oral

Title: "A prospective evaluation of the impact of early antibiotic initiation in infants with myelomeningocele in Zambia"

Mentor: Rebecca Reynolds, Neurosurgery

Excellence in Anatomy and Cell Biology Research

Brett Wineinger, M1 **Oral**

Title: *"CellSpy: A fully automated immunofluorescent image analysis tool."*

Mentor: Amy Ryan, Anatomy and Cell Biology

Margaret V. Lunsford Award for Research in Anesthesia

Tarynn Rodman, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Understanding Breakthrough Pain During Labor Analgesia: The Role of Neuraxial Analgesia Duration in a Predominantly Combined Spinal-Epidural Practice Using PIEB/PCEA"*

Mentor: Unyime Ituk, Anesthesia

Excellence in Anesthesia Basic Science Research

Alaa Ali, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"DNA Methylation and Pathway Signatures Associated With Postoperative Delirium and Clinical Outcomes"*

Mentor: Daisuke Sugiyama and Gen Shinozaki, Anesthesia

Arthur A. Spector Award in Basic Biomedical Research

Jasmine Miftahof, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Investigating Environmental PCBs, Adipocyte Crosstalk, and Matrix Mechanics in Macrophage Polarization During Tissue Repair"*

Mentor: James Ankrum, Biomedical Engineering

Nicholas P. Rossi Award for Cardiothoracic Surgery Research

Santo Roy, M2 **Oral**

Title: *"Investigation of TGF- β mediated phenotypic switching of airway epithelial cells via EMT in Chronic Lung Allograft Dysfunction"*

Mentor: Kalpaj Parekh, Cardiothoracic Surgery

Excellence in Dermatology Research

Tatiana Anderson, M2 **Oral**

Title: *"The Invasive Proliferative Gelatinous Mass is a Specialized Inflammatory Niche of Hidradenitis Suppurativa"*

Mentor: Michal Kidacki, Dermatology

Excellence in Emergency Medicine Research

Kendall Haefele, M4 **Poster**

Title: *"Droperidol vs. Ketamine for Out-of-Hospital Agitation Management"*

Mentor: Peter Georgakakos, Emergency Medicine

John Stokes Award for Research in Internal Medicine

Nathan Steimel, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Outcomes of Budesonide Compared to Prednisone for Immune Checkpoint Inhibitor Colitis and Immunotherapy Rechallenge"*

Mentor: Mohammed Milhem, Internal Medicine

Excellence in Internal Medicine Research

Kane Zemo, M1 **Poster**

Title: *"Ac2-26 Activates Concordant Plaque-Stabilization Programs in Reversa Mice and an Ex Vivo Human Coronary Atherosclerosis Model"*

Mentor: Jennifer Streeter, Internal Medicine

Excellence in Internal Medicine Research

Perapa Chotiprasidhi, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Effects of a Very Low-Calorie Diet on Metabolic and Microbiome Profiles in Women with Obesity and Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatotic Liver Disease"*

Mentor: Marcelo Correia, Internal Medicine

Excellence in Microbiology and Immunology Research

Gabriel Weigel, M2G **Oral**

Title: *"Knock out of Lactate Transporters MCT1 and MCT4 Differentially Polarize T Cells Towards a Tfh and Th1 phenotype during Plasmodium Infection."*

Mentor: Noah Butler, Microbiology and Immunology

Research Excellence in Molecular Physiology and Biophysics

Daniel Akinremi, M2G **Oral**

Title: *"pH-Mediated Changes in Antiarrhythmic Efficacy
The Effect of pH on Flecainide Inhibition of Na channels in the Heart"*

Mentor: Barry London and Christopher Ahern, Internal Medicine

Excellence in Basic Neuroscience Research

Kaisa Bornhoft, M2G **Oral**

Title: *"Same target, worse aim: how aging alters cognitive precision"*

Mentor: Nandakumar Narayanan, Neurology

Excellence in Clinical Neuroscience Research

Corey Plate, M2G **Poster**

Title: *"Empathy: Organizing a Field"*

Mentor: Daniel Tranel, Neurology

Excellence in Translational Neuroscience Research

Caleb Greene, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Plaque Enhancement on High-Resolution MRI and its association with Recurrent Ischemic Stroke in Intracranial Atherosclerotic Disease: A Multicenter Longitudinal Study"*

Mentor: Edgar Samaniego, Neurology

Excellence in Neuroscience and Pharmacology Research

Chase Eastham, M2G **Oral**

Title: *"Synergistic Trends Between Targeted Therapeutics for Malignant Peripheral Nerve Sheath Tumors"*

Mentor: Dawn Quelle, Neuroscience and Pharmacology

Excellence in Clinical Research in Obstetrics & Gynecology

Jordan Bayles, M2 **Oral**

Title: *"Differences in self-reporting nicotine use in pregnant people: comparing survey responses to paired clinical data"*

Mentor: Donna Santillan, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Excellence in Obstetrics & Gynecology Research

Gwen Harty, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"It's Not All Your Fault: Paternal Health Status and the Impacts on Preeclampsia Development"*

Mentor: Mark Santillan, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Thomas A. Weingeist Award in Ophthalmology

Ellie Garcia, M2 **Oral**

Title: *"MMP9 Genotype and Systemic Immunophenotype in Neovascular Age-Related Macular Degeneration"*

Mentor: Elliott Sohn, Ophthalmology

William E. Scott Research Award in Ophthalmology

Grant Leach, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Test-Retest Repeatability of the Smart System Virtual Reality Perimetric Headset"*

Mentor: Andrew Pouw, Ophthalmology

Hansjoerg E. Kolder Award for Ophthalmology Research

Corinne Bovee, M2 **Oral**

Title: *"AI-Derived Volumetric Intraretinal Fluid Predicts Anti-VEGF Treatment Response Beyond Central Subfield Thickness in Diabetic Macular Edema"*

Mentor: Elliott Sohn, Ophthalmology

Ignasio V. Ponseti Prize in Orthopaedic Research

Hayley Chappell, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Patients' Expectations and Education Surrounding Shoulder Surgery"*

Mentor: Brendan Patterson, Orthopedics and Rehabilitation

Research Excellence in Orthopaedics

Reed Adajar, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Risk Factors for Pickleball-Related Orthopedic Injuries: A 10-Year Analysis of Injury Patterns in a Rapidly Growing Sport"*

Mentor: Robert Westermann, Orthopedics and Rehabilitation

Excellence in Otolaryngology Research

Regan DeMaris, M2 **Oral**

Title: *"Quantitative Laryngoscopic Assessment of Vocal Fold Bowing in Presbyphonia"*

Mentor: Matthew Hoffman, Otolaryngology

Richard G. Lynch Award for Excellence in Pathology Research

Sandeep Dhingra, M4 **Poster**

Title: *"Co-occurring Autoimmune and Immune-Mediated Diseases in a University of Iowa MS Cohort Reveal a Broad Systemic Inflammatory Phenotype"*

Mentor: Ashutosh Mangalam, Pathology

Richard G. Lynch Award for Excellence in Pathology Research

Cyrus Barati, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Reversing Aging-Associated Epigenetic Silencing in Endometrial Cancer Using Combined 5-Azacytidine and Romidepsin"*

Mentor: Shujie Yang, Pathology

Excellence in Pediatric Basic Science Research

Preston Johnson, M2G **Oral**

Title: *"Role of Microglia in Thalamic Neurodegeneration Following Traumatic Brain Injury"*

Mentor: Elizabeth Newell, Pediatrics

Excellence in Pediatric Clinical Research

Alejandro Garay, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Impact of oral cavity and velopharyngeal dimensions on sleep disordered breathing and pre-speech language metrics in infants with oral cleft"*

Mentor: Amy Conrad, Pediatrics

George Winokur Research Award in Psychiatry

Karl Wilson, LOA **Poster**

Title: *"Patient Characteristics and Retention at Iowa's Only Same-Day Walk-In MAT Clinic"*

Mentor: Andrea Weber, Psychiatry

Bob Robinson Research Award in Psychiatry

Margaret Huang, M2 **Oral**

Title: *"Sleep changes as a predictor of antidepressant response to electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)"*

Mentor: Mark Niciu, Psychiatry

Lauretta Bender Research Award in Psychiatry

Manar Yaseen, M2 **Oral**

Title: *"Changes in Brain Structure and function in Juvenile-Onset Huntington's Disease Over One Year"*

Mentor: Peg Nopoulos, Psychiatry

Larry W. Oberley Award in Radiation Oncology

Asya Lengel, M2 **Oral**

Title: *"KEAP1-NRF2 Pathway Upregulates Thiol Antioxidants, NADPH Regeneration, and Iron Internalization that are Crucial for Survival and Proliferation in NSCLC Cells"*

Mentor: Douglas R. Spitz, Radiation Oncology

Jason Martin Medical Student Research Award in Radiology

Keegan Staab, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Quantitative CT for Early Detection of Chronic Rejection in Lung Transplantation"*

Mentor: Sean Fain, Radiology

Kimberly Ephgrave Medical Student Award for Research in Surgery

Sarah Fu, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Tirzepatide activates GIPR-mediated signaling and enhances tyrosine kinase inhibitor sensitivity in gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine neoplasm cells"*

Mentor: James Howe, Surgery

Excellence in Urology Research

Sean Carroll, M2 **Poster**

Title: *"Clinical Data Artificial Intelligence Platform for Real-Time Chart Abstraction of Prostate Cancer in the Electronic Health Record"*

Mentor: Kenneth Nepple, Urology